

A
PROPOSAL
FOR GIVING
BADGES
TO THE
BEGGARS
IN ALL THE
Parishes of DUBLIN.

By the Dean of St. PATRICK'S.



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A
PROPOSAL
 FOR GIVING
BADGES, &c.



IT hath been a general Complaint, that the Poor-House, especially since the new Constitution by Act of Parliament, hath been of no Benefit to this City, for the Ease of which it was wholly intended. I had the Honour to be a Member of it many Years before it was new modelled by the Legislature; not from any personal Regard, but meerly as

one of the two Deans, who are of Course put into most Commissions that relate to the City ; and I have likewise the Honour to have been left out of several Commissions upon the Score of Party, in which my Predecessors, Time out of Mind, have always been Members.

THE first Commission was made up of about fifty Persons, which were the Lord Mayor, Aldermen, and Sheriffs, and some few other Citizens : The Judges, the two Arch-Bishops, the two Deans of the City, and one or two more Gentlemen. And I must confess my Opinion, that the dissolving the old Commission, and establishing a new One of near three Times the Number, have been the great Cause of rendering so good a Design not only useless, but a Grievance instead of a Benefit to the City. In the present Commission all the City-Clergy are included, besides a great Number of Squires, not only those who reside in *Dublin*, and the Neighbourhood, but several who live at a
great

great Distance, and cannot possibly have the least Concern for the Advantage of the City.

At the few General Meetings that I have attended since the new Establishment, I observed very little was done, except one or two Acts of extream Justice, which I then thought might as well have been spared : And I have found the Court of Assistants usually taken up in little Brangles about Coachmen, or adjusting Accounts of Meal and Small-Beer ; which, however Necessary, might sometimes have given Place to Matters of much greater Moment, I mean some Schemes recommended to the General Board, for answering the chief Ends in erecting and establishing such a Poor-House, and endowing it with so considerable a Revenue : And the principal End I take to have been that of maintaining the Poor and Orphans of the City, where the Parishes are not able to do it ; and clearing the Streets from all Strollers, Foreigners, and sturdy Beggars,

gars, with which, to the universal Complaint and Admiration, *Dublin* is more infested since the Establishment of the Poor-House, than it was ever known to be since its first Erection.

As the whole Fund for supporting this Hospital is raised only from the Inhabitants of the City ; so there can be hardly any Thing more absurd than to see it misemployed in maintaining Foreign Beggars and Bastards, or Orphans, whose Country Landlords never contributed one Shilling towards their Support. I would engage, that half this Revenue, if employed with common Care, and no very great Degree of common Honesty, would maintain all the real Objects of Charity in this City, except a small Number of Original Poor in every Parish, who might without being burthensome to the Parishioners find a tolerable Support.

I HAVE for some Years past applied my self to several Lord Mayors, and to the late Arch-Bishop of *Dublin,*

lin, for a Remedy to this Evil of Foreign Beggars ; and they all appeared ready to receive a very plain Proposal, I mean, that of badging the Original Poor of every Parish, who begged in the Streets ; that, the said Beggars should be confined to their own Parishes ; that, they should wear their Badges well sown upon one of their Shoulders, always visible, on Pain of being whipt and turned out of Town ; or whatever legal Punishment may be thought proper and effectual. But, by the wrong Way of thinking in some Clergymen, and the Indifference of others, this Method was perpetually defeated to their own continual Disquiet, which they do not ill deserve ; and if the Grievance affected only them, it would be of less Consequence ; because the Remedy is in their own Power. But, all Street-walkers, and Shop-keepers, bear an equal Share in this hourly Vexation.

I NEVER heard more than one Objection against this Expedient of badging the Poor, and confining their
Walks

Walks to their several Parishes. The Objection was this: What shall we do with the Foreign Beggars? Must they be left to starve? I answered, No; but they must be driven or whipt out of Town; and let the next Country Parish do as they please, or rather after the Practice in *England*, send them from one Parish to another, until they reach their own Homes. By the old Laws of *England* still in Force, and I presume by those of *Ireland*, every Parish is bound to maintain its own Poor; and the Matter is of no such Consequence in this Point as some would make it, whether a Country Parish be rich or poor. In the remoter and poorer Parishes of the Kingdom, all Necessaries for Life proper for poor People are comparatively cheaper; I mean Buttermilk, Oatmeal, Potatoes, and other Vegetables; and every Farmer or Cottager who is not himself a Beggar, can sometimes spare a Sup or a Morsel, not worth the fourth Part of a Farthing, to an indigent Neighbour of his

his own Parish, who is disabled from Work. A Beggar Native of the Parish is known to the 'Squire, to the Church Minister, to the Popish Priest, or the Conventicle Teachers, as well as to every Farmer: He hath generally some Relations able to live, and contribute something to his Maintenance. None of which Advantages can be reasonably expected on a Removal to Places where he is altogether unknown. If he be not quite maimed, he and his Trull, and Litter of Brats (if he hath any) may get half their Support by doing some Kind of Work in their Power, and thereby be less burthensome to the People. In short, all Necessaries of Life grow in the Country, and not in Cities, and are cheaper where they grow; nor is it equal that Beggars should put us to the Charge of giving them Victuals, and the Carriage too.

BUT, when the Spirit of wandring takes him, attended by his Female, and their Equipage of Children, he becomes

becomes a Nuisance to the whole Country: He and his Female are Thieves, and teach the Trade of stealing to their Brood at four Years old; and if his Infirmities be counterfeited, it is dangerous for a single Person unarmed to meet him on the Road. He wanders from one County to another, but still with a View to this Town, whither he arrives at last, and enjoys all the Priviledges of a *Dublin Beggar*.

I do not wonder that the Country Squires should be very willing to send up their Colonies; but why the City should be content to receive them, is beyond my Imagination.

If the City were obliged by their Charter to maintain a thousand Beggars, they could do it cheaper by eighty per Cent. a hundred Miles off, than in this Town, or any of its Suburbs.

THERE is no Village in *Connaught*, that in Proportion shares so deeply in the Daily increasing Miseries of *Ireland*.

land, as its Capital City; to which Miseries there hardly remained any Addition except the perpetual Swarms of Foreign Beggars, who might be banished in a Month without Expence, and with very little Trouble.

As I am personally acquainted with a great Number of Street Beggars, *find* I ~~make~~ some weak Attempts ~~to~~ have been made in one or two Parishes to promote the wearing of Badges; and my first Question to those who ask an Alms, is, *Where is your Badge?* I have in several Years, met with about a Dozen who were ready to produce them, some out of their Pockets, others from under their Coat, and two or three on their Shoulders, only covered with a Sort of Capes which they could lift up or let down upon Occasion. They are too lazy to work; they are not afraid to steal, nor ashamed to beg, and yet are too proud to be seen with a Badge, as many of them have confessed to me, and not a few in very injurious Terms, particularly the Females.
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They all look upon such an Obligation as a high Indignity done to their Office. I appeal to all indifferent People, whether such Wretches deserve to be relieved. As to myself, I must confess, this absurd Insolence hath so affected me, that for several Years past, I have not disposed of one single Farthing to a Street Beggar, nor intend to do so until I see a better Regulation; and I have endeavoured to persuade all my Brother-walkers to follow my Example, which most of them assure me they do. For, if Beggary be not able to beat out Pride, it cannot deserve Charity. However, as to Persons in Coaches and Chairs, they bear but little of the Persecution we suffer, and are willing to leave it intirely upon us.

To say the Truth, there is not a more undeserving, vicious Race of human Kind than the Bulk of those who are reduced to Beggary, even in this beggarly Country. For, as a great Part of our publick Miseries is originally

originally owing to our own Faults (but, what those Faults are I am grown by Experience too wary to mention) so I am confident, that among the meaner People, nineteen in twenty of those who are reduced to a starving Condition, did not become so by what Lawyers call the Work of GOD, either upon their Bodies or Goods; but meerly from their own Idleness, attended with all Manner of Vices, particularly Drunkenness, Thievery, and Cheating.

WHOEVER inquires, as I have frequently done, from those who have asked me an Alms, what was their former Course of Life, will find them to have been Servants in good Families, broken Tradesmen, Labourers, Cottagers, and what they call decayed Housekeepers; but (to use their own Cant) reduced by Losses and Crosses, by which nothing can be understood but Idleness and Vice.

As this is the only Christian Country, where People, contrary to the old Maxim, are the Poverty and not the Riches

Riches of the Nation, so, the Blessing of Increase and Multiply is by us converted into a Curse: And, as Marriage hath been ever countenanced in all free Countries, so we should be less miserable if it were discouraged in ours, as far as can be consistent with Christianity. It is seldom known in *England*, that the Labourer, the lower Mechanick, the Servant, or the Cottager, thinks of marrying until he hath saved up a Stock of Money sufficient to carry on his Business; nor takes a Wife without a suitable Portion; and as seldom fails of making a yearly Addition to that Stock, with a View of providing for his Children. But, in this Kingdom the Case is directly contrary, where many thousand Couples are yearly married, whose whole united Fortunes, bating the Rags on their Backs, would not be sufficient to purchase a Pint of Butter-milk for their Wedding Supper, nor have any Prospect of supporting their *honourable State* but by Service, or Labour,

Labour, or Thievery. Nay, their *Happiness* is often deferred until they find Credit to borrow, or Cunning to steal a Shilling to pay their Popish Priest, or infamous Couple-Beggar. Surely no miraculous Portion of Wisdom would be required to find some kind of Remedy against this destructive Evil, or at least, not to draw the Consequences of it upon our decaying City, the greatest Part whereof must of Course in a few Years become desolate, or in Ruins.

IN all other Nations, that are not absolutely barbarous, Parents think themselves bound by the Law of Nature and Reason to make some Provision for their Children; but the Reasons offered by the Inhabitants of *Ireland* for marrying, is, that they may have Children to maintain them when they grow old and unable to work.

I AM informed that we have been for some Time past extremely obliged to *England* for one very beneficial Branch of Commerce: For, it seems
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they are grown so Gracious as to transmit us continually Colonies of Beggars, in Return of a Million of Money they receive Yearly from hence. That I may give no Offence, I profess to mean real *English* Beggars in the literal Meaning of the World, as it is usually understood by Protestants. It seems, the Justice of the Peace and Parish-Officers in the Western Coasts of *England*, have a good while followed the Trade of exporting hither their supernumerary Beggars, in order to advance the *English* Protestant Interest among us; and, these they are so kind to send over *Gratis*, and Duty-free. I have had the Honour more than once to attend large Cargoes of them from *Chester* to *Dublin*: And I was then so ignorant as to give my Opinion, that our City should receive them into *Bridewell*, and after a Month's Residence, having been well whipt twice a Day, fed with Bran and Water, and put to hard Labour, they should be returned honestly back with Thanks

as cheap as they came : Or, if that were not approved of, I propos'd, that whereas one *English* Man is allowed to be of equal intrinsick Value with twelve born in *Ireland*, we should in Justice return them a Dozen for One, to dispose of as they pleased. But to return.

As to the native Poor of this City, there would be little or no Damage in confining them to their several Parishes. For Instance : A Beggar of the Parish of St. *Warborough's*, or any other Parish here, if he be an Object of Compassion, hath an equal Chance to receive his Proportion of Alms from every charitable Hand ; because the Inhabitants, one or other walk through every Street in Town, and give their Alms, without considering the Place, wherever they think it may be well disposed of : And, these Helps, added to what they get in Eatables by going from House to House, among the Gentry and Citizens, will, without being ve-

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ry burthenfome, be fufficient to keep them alive.

It is true, the Poor of the Suburb Parishes will not have altogether the fame Advantage, becaufe they are not equally in the Road of Bufinefs and Paffengers: But here it is to be confidered, that the Beggars there have not fo good a Title to Publick Charity, becaufe moft of them are Strollers from the Country, and compofe a Principal Part of that great Nuiſance, which we ought to remove.

I SHOULD be apt to think, that few Things can be more irkfome to a City-Minifter than a Number of Beggars which do not belong to his Diſtrict, whom he hath no Obligation to take Care of, who are no Part of his Flock, and who take the Bread out of the Mouths of thoſe, to whom it properly belongs. When I mention this Abufe to any Minifter of a City-Parish, he uſually lays the Fault upon the Beadles, who he ſays are bribed by the foreign Beggars; and as thoſe Beadles often keep Ale-Houſes, they find

find their Account in such Customers. This Evil might easily be remedied, if the Parishes would make some small Addition to the Salaries of a Beadle, and be more careful in the Choice of those Officers. But, I conceive there is one effectual Method, in the Power of every Minister to put in Practice; I mean, by making it the Interest of all his own original Poor, to drive out Intruders: For, if the Parish-Beggars were absolutely forbidden by the Minister and Church-Officers, to suffer Strollers to come into the Parish, upon Pain of themselves being not permitted to beg Alms at the Church-Doors, or at the Houses and Shops of the Inhabitants; they would prevent Interlopers more effectually than twenty Beadles.

AND, here I cannot but take Notice of the great Indiscretion in our City-Shopkeepers, who suffer their Doors to be daily besieged by Crowds of Beggars, (as the Gates of a Lord are by Duns,) to the great Disgust
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and Vexation of many Customers, whom I have frequently observed to go to other Shops, rather than suffer such a Persecution; which might easily be avoided, if no foreign Beggars were allowed to infest them.

WHEREFORE, I do assert, that the Shopkeepers who are the greatest Complainers of this Grievance, lamenting that for every Customer, they are worried by fifty Beggars, do very well deserve what they suffer, when a 'Prentice with a Horse-Whip is able to lash every Beggar from the Shop, who is not of the Parish, and doth not wear the Badge of that Parish on his Shoulder, well fastned and fairly visible; and if this Practice were universal in every House, to all the sturdy Vagrants, we should in a few Weeks clear the Town of all Mendicants, except those who have a proper Title to our Charity: As for the Aged and Infirm, it would be sufficient to give them nothing, and then they must starve or follow their Brethren.

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It was the City that first endowed this Hospital, and those who afterwards contributed, as they were such who generally inhabited here; so they intended what they gave to be for the Use of the City's Poor. The Revenues which have since been raised by Parliament, are wholly paid by the City, without the least Charge upon any other Part of the Kingdom; and therefore nothing could more defeat the original Design, than to misapply those Revenues on strolling Beggars, or Bastards from the Country, which bears no Share in the Charges we are at.

IF some of the Out-Parishes be over-burthened with Poor, the Reason must be, that the greatest Part of those Poor are Strollers from the Country, who nestle themselves where they can find the cheapest Lodgings, and from thence infest every Part of the Town, out of which they ought to be whipped as a most insufferable Nuisance, being nothing else but a profligate Clan of Thieves, Drunkards,

kards, Heathens, and Whore-Mongers, fitter to be rooted out of the Face of the Earth, than suffered to levy a vast annual Tax upon the City, which shares too deep in the publick Miseries brought on us by the Oppressions we lye under from our Neighbours, our Brethren, our Country-men, our Fellow Protestants, and Fellow Subjects.

SOME Time ago I was appointed one of a Committee to inquire into the State of the Work-house ; where we found that a Charity bestowed by a great Person for a certain Time, which in its Consequences operated very much to the Detriment of the House : For, when the Time was elapsed, all those who were supported by that Charity, continued on the same Foot with the rest on the Foundation ; and being generally a Pack of profligate vagabond Wretches from several Parts of the Kingdom, corrupted all the rest ; so partial, or treacherous, or interested, or ignorant, or mistaken, are generally all Re-
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commenders, not only to Employments, but even to Charity it self.

I KNOW it is complained, that the Difficulty of driving Foreign Beggars out of the City, is charged upon the *Bellowers* (as they are called) who find their Accounts best in suffering those Vagrants to follow their Trade through every Part of the Town. But, this Abuse might easily be remedied, and very much to the Advantage of the whole City, if better Salaries were given to those who execute that Office in the several Parishes, and would make it their Interest to clear the Town of those Caterpillars, rather than hazard the Loss of an Employment that would give them an honest Livelyhood. But, if that would fail, yet a general Resolution of never giving Charity to a Street Beggar out of his own Parish, or without a visible Badge, would infallibly force all Vagrants to depart.

THERE is generally a Vagabond Spirit in Beggars, which ought to be
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discouraged and severely punished. It is owing to the same Causes that drove them into Poverty, I mean, Idleness, Drunkenness, and rash Marriages, without the least Prospect of supporting a Family by honest Endeavours, which never came into their Thoughts. It is observed, that hardly one Beggar in twenty, looks upon himself to be relieved by receiving Bread or other Food; and they have in this Town been frequently seen to pour out of their Pitcher, good Broth that hath been given them, into the Kennel; neither do they much regard Cloaths, unless to sell them; for their Rags are Part of their Tools with which they work: They want only Ale, Brandy, and other strong Liquors, which cannot be had without Money; and, Money as they conceive, always abounds in the Metropolis.

I HAD some other Thoughts to offer upon this Subject. But, as I am a Desponder in my Nature, and have tolerably well discovered the Disposition

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fiction of our People, who never will move a Step towards easing themselves from any one single Grievance; it will be thought, that I have already said too much, and to little or no Purpose; which hath often been the Fate, or Fortune of the Writer.

J. SWIFT.

April 22,
1737.



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